

'De-escalation a must to reduce Indo-Pak tension'

PTI, Islamabad

Alleging that lack of reciprocity by India has resulted in continuing tensions between the two countries, President Pervez Musharraf has called for tripartite dialogue between India, Pakistan and representatives of Kashmir to resolve the issue.

Musharraf told a delegation of European Union and Scandinavian countries that although the tensions between the two countries were lower than before, it could be because of a change in Indian intent and not in its capability.

Saying that tensions would remain as long as Indian forces remained mobilised at the borders, he recounted a number of steps taken by Pakistan to reduce tension and pointed out to the "lack of reciprocity" from the Indian side.

Japanese PM reshuffles his cabinet

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Monday reshuffled his 17-month old cabinet for the first time, discarding Financial Affairs Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa, as well as the defence and farm ministers, a government official said.

Koizumi appointed cabinet newcomer Shigeru Ishiba as defence chief to replace Gen Nakatani, and Tadamori Oshima as farm minister in place of Tsutomu Takebe, said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, who stayed in his post.

Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Heizo Takenaka remained in the cabinet and also assumed the post of finance affairs minister vacated by Yanagisawa, who was strongly opposed to controversial proposed reforms in the banking sector.

Kostunica-Labus confirm 2nd round in Serbia polls

AFP, Belgrade

Serbia's two leading presidential candidates, Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica and Yugoslav deputy Prime Minister Miroslav Labus, confirmed early Monday they will go to a second-round runoff in two weeks.

"The game continues, this was the first half. We are facing the second half now," Labus said following Sunday's first-round of voting, insisting that the difference between him and Kostunica was "less than 100,000" votes.

And Kostunica said he had expected the second round even before the vote.

"I believe that Serbia is mature enough and that the second round will succeed," he told reporters early Monday.

Pageant bans 'Miss Pakistan'

AP, Islamabad

Organisers have disqualified a woman from a beauty pageant in Tokyo after Pakistani officials objected to her representing the country, saying participation in the contest denigrated Islam and brought shame to Pakistan, officials said.

"We will intensify our diplomatic initiatives to remind the leading nations of the international coalition against terrorism that they must redeem their pledge to combat and defeat terrorism everywhere, irrespective of the cause it espouses," Vajpayee told a police conference here.

"Which means, Pakistan must be held accountable for its continued sponsorship of terrorism in India," Vajpayee also said he believed the situation in Indian-administered

West Africa sends peace force to Ivory Coast

AFP, Accra

West African leaders decided Sunday to send peacekeepers into Ivory Coast as a buffer force between the army and rebels, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade announced.

He made the announcement at the end of an emergency summit on the crisis in Accra, the capital of neighbouring Ghana.

Wade said that countries which supported the 15-nation Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) -- a clear reference to at least France and the United States - would provide logistical help, including transport and equipment.



PHOTO: AFP

This picture released by the Palestinian Authority shows Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (L) meeting with UN special envoy Terje Roed-Larsen (R) in his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday shortly after Israeli troops withdrew from the compound.

Sharon faces fall-out of pullout fiasco

AFP, Jerusalem

With pictures of a triumphant Yasser Arafat splashed across the front pages of the Israeli press on Monday, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon faced the political fall-out of his complete capitulation to his powerful ally Washington in ending the siege of the Palestinian leader.

Sharon was given some breathing space to recover from his humiliating setback, as he jetted off to late Sunday Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and discuss Russian ties with Israel's arch-foe Iran.

At home, the withering barrage of criticism was relentless, while in Ramallah, Arafat -- still flush with the triumph of surviving his second siege in five months -- resumed his normal business, meeting European diplomats in his battle-scarred Muqataa headquarters.

Israel made no official comment on the fate of 41 wanted suspects they said had been inside Arafat's base, and whose surrender the Jewish state had insisted on, defying a UN resolution and increasing US pressure to maintain its blockade on Arafat for 10 days before suddenly bowing to Washington and withdrawing on Sunday.

Housing Minister Nathan

Sharansky told Israeli public radio the government had failed to gauge the strength of the US mood as Washington tries to woo Arab states into backing its campaign against Iraq.

"We did not assess the situation correctly, when we made the decision two weeks ago, the extent to which America had already begun the countdown to an attack on Iraq, that just during those days America would enter into confrontations with the UN and Europe, and would be unable to tolerate one more confrontation," he said.

US lawmakers divided over authorising Bush for war

AFP, Washington

The US Congress remained deeply divided Sunday over whether to authorise the use of force against Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein on the eve of key Iraqi talks with UN weapons inspectors as British Prime Minister Tony Blair stood his ground on tough action to disarm Baghdad.

However, US President George W. Bush appeared to be gaining ground with opponents in Congress as Baghdad, which has vowed to reject any new conditions on arms inspections, accused Washington and London of attacking its international airport at Basra for the second

time in a week.

Lawmakers are debating the language on a draft resolution that would grant Bush the authority to "use all means" to disarm Iraq, which Washington accuses of developing weapons of mass destruction.

"I believe you will see, at the end of this coming week or early in the next week an overwhelming majority support vote in both houses of Congress to support the president if we have to go in and orchestrate a regime change militarily," Senator John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, told CNN.

While many opposition

Democrats have questioned what they see as Bush's headlong rush to war, others said Washington must stand firm in demanding unfettered access to Iraqi sites.

"We have to have absolute, total access," Senator John Breaux, a Louisiana Democrat, told Fox News.

However, Breaux echoed the concerns of many lawmakers that a close vote on Iraq could undermine US credibility.

"We don't want to get into a situation like Vietnam, for instance, where we had a house divided, the Congress was divided, the American people were divided," he said.

Pakistan must be rebuked for supporting 'terror': Vajpayee

AFP, New Delhi

The world must hold Pakistan accountable for its continued support of "terrorism" against India, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said Monday.

"We will intensify our diplomatic initiatives to remind the leading nations of the international coalition against terrorism that they must redeem their pledge to combat and defeat terrorism everywhere, irrespective of the cause it espouses," Vajpayee told a police conference here.

"Which means, Pakistan must be held accountable for its continued sponsorship of terrorism in India."

Vajpayee also said he believed the situation in Indian-administered

Kashmir, where 37,000 people have been killed in the past 13 years in a rebellion by Islamic militants, is at a "turning point."

Kashmir, he said, would see an end to insurgency in the same way that Sikh militants who were active in India's northern state of Punjab during the 1980s had been largely quashed by security forces by the early 1990s.

"I am confident that the state will leave the nightmare of militancy behind and return to peace, normalcy and development," he said.

"We have seen it happen in Punjab, where the police and security forces with the cooperation of people, ultimately overcome the challenge of militancy."

India claims Pakistan is sponsor-

ing the militants and accused Islamabad of being behind an attack on a Hindu temple in western Gujarat state last Tuesday, in which two rebels gunned down 31 people before they themselves were shot dead by Indian commandos.

That attack, according to Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani, was part of the violence which has surged in Indian Kashmir since August 2, when India announced dates for legislative assembly elections in the restive state.

Some 600 people have already died in the Kashmir violence since that date, with two of the four rounds still to go -- one on Tuesday and the final one on October 8.

Iraq opens talks with UN arms experts in Vienna

US seeks to deter Iraqi officers from firing biological weapons

AFP, Vienna

Iraq officials opened talks with UN arms experts in Vienna Monday to discuss resuming inspections as the United States kept up its threats to enforce disarmament if necessary.

Hans Blix, chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), said that the purpose of the negotiations "is that if and when inspections come about we will not have clashes inside."

He also said the UN team would have unlimited access to sites. Asked if there would be limits on where the inspectors could go, Blix said: "No, I am not aware of any such places."

But he refused to be specific about whether the inspectors would have access to all sites without delay, an issue before the inspections broke off nearly four years ago.

The United States is pressing the UN Security Council to issue a tough new resolution on Iraqi disarmament.

Resolution 1284 said that if Iraq allowed UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resume work and cooperated fully with them, the crippling sanctions imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1991 could be suspended.

But the administration of US President George W. Bush has said Saddam cannot be trusted.

It wants to shore up 1284 -- adopted when former president Bill Clinton was in office -- with a new text spelling out what Secretary of State Colin Powell has called "the hard consequences" if Iraq fails to comply.

A spokeswoman for President Jacques Chirac said Friday that France opposed any resolution that provided for the automatic use of military force.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is preparing a campaign to deter Iraqi officers from firing chemical or biological weapons during a US invasion, the Washington Post reported Monday.

US defence and intelligence officials believe President Saddam Hussein has given field commanders conditional authority to use the weapons in the event of an attack.

Final authority to use the weapons rests with Saddam, but the Iraqi president's knowledge that the United States would seek to take down Iraqi command centres and communications systems at the start of any military strike means he probably has already given authority for firing chemical and biological weapons to his most loyal commanders in the field, the Post reported.

One of the biggest challenges US military planners face is determining which Iraqi military units can be encouraged to defect in event of a US invasion and how to communicate with them, defence officials told the Post.

US officials told the daily that the efforts to reach the Iraqi officers might include massive leafleting of Iraqi military positions.

British envoy holding talks in Beijing over Iraq

AFP, Beijing

A senior British defence envoy was due to hold talks with Chinese officials in Beijing Monday to push Britain's case over a tough new UN resolution on Iraq, British sources said.

William Ehrman, director general of defence and international security at the Ministry of Defence in London, would meet Chinese foreign ministry officials Monday afternoon, said a British source in Beijing.

"He is here to talk about the UN Security Council resolution on Iraq, to brief China about what we are thinking," the source said.

Pakistan opens chemical plants to inspection

PTI, Islamabad

For the first time since it became a signatory to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in 1993, Pakistan has decided to throw open its five "big industrial" chemical plants for international inspection.

"All arrangements for inspection have either been finalised or in progress to provide security to the inspectors for which the Pakistan foreign office has made a 'strict schedule' involving many local intelligence and security agencies," the local daily The News quoted officials here as saying on Sunday.

However, the newspaper did not indicate the date of the inspection but said it would be completed "in one go" and "within 24 hours" due to threats to the safety of inspectors posed by Al-Qaeda.

US warships in India for war games

AFP, New Delhi

Two warships carrying 700 US servicemen have begun four days of joint naval exercises with their Indian counterparts, officials said Monday.

Captain Thomas S. Kennedy, commanding officer of the USS Chancellorsville, told reporters in the southern Indian state of Kerala that the exercises ending on October 2 "would serve as a platform for co-operation between the US and Indian navies."

The joint exercises will help foster closer ties required to tackle the "common enemy of international terrorism," Kennedy told the Press Trust of India news agency.



PHOTO: AFP

Anti-war demonstrators march to the British Embassy on Sunday to protest Britain's support for US President George W. Bush's war rhetoric against Iraq during a weekend of demonstrations in Washington, DC. The march marked an end to protests during the World Bank-International Monetary Fund meetings.

Thousands march against US policies on Iraq

AFP, Washington

Thousands protesting the Bush administration's stance on Iraq marched peacefully up Washington's "embassy row" Sunday, wrapping up three days of demonstrations in conjunction with World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings.

The crowd, which included people of all ages and many who did not participate in earlier weekend protests, numbered at least 5,000. Police refused to give an official estimate.

Attacking another country on the assumption that it may be dangerous "is the most outrageous suggestion that I have ever heard in my life," said Peter Robinson, 59, who travelled much of the day to join the protest.

A war on Iraq "has to do with oil and electoral politics," he said. "It is unprecedented and un-American," he added.

"Dick Cheney, dinosaur, we don't want your oil war!" chanted groups of protesters, as they marched up Massachusetts Avenue, the Washington street where foreign missions are concentrated.

The crowd stopped at the embassies of countries such as Turkey that support the US hard-line against Baghdad to vent their anger.

Organisers from the National Network to End the War against Iraq said marchers were also prompted "to cheer those embassies who have held firm in their stance against a US attack against Iraq."

The march ended near the

embassy of Britain, Washington's ally in the effort to oust Saddam Hussein, located across from a service entry to the Naval Observatory, the official residence for US vice presidents.

Hundreds of police officers, some on horseback, blocked the protesters from reaching either the front door of the British embassy or the main entrance to the Naval Observatory, their main objectives. After a brief rally, the crowd began their walk back just after 2:00 GMT.

Thousands of police, many brought in from other cities, been deployed around Washington since Friday anticipating protests seeking to disrupt the annual World Bank and IMF meetings.

'Every country has right to pre-emptive strike'

PTI, Washington

Finance Minister Jaswant Singh has said every country has a right to pre-emptive strikes as an inherent part of its right to self-defence and it was not the prerogative of any one nation.

"Pre-emption or prevention is inherent in deterrence. Where there is deterrence there is pre-emption. The same thing is there in Article 51 of the UN Charter which calls it 'the right of self-defence'," he told reporters on Saturday.

Singh, who was here to attend the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, met US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Director of Policy Planning Richard Haass.

He said he discussed the "doctrine" of pre-emption or prevention with the American leaders and decided it was more an appropriate issue for academic discussion than for a press conference.

"Every nation has that right (of pre-emption). It is not the prerogative of any one country," Singh said. "Pre-emption is the right of any nation to prevent injury to itself. Detering an enemy from attacking you is inherent in Article 51 of the UN Charter. That is now becoming a complex academic discussion."

Singh said he had discussed the evolving situation in Iraq and the Middle East with US leaders at length.

3rd round of Kashmir polls today

AFP, Srinagar

Atense Indian-administered Kashmir was gearing up for Tuesday's third round of voting for staggered assembly polls that have been marred by relentless violence and the deaths of almost 600 people.

India is hoping to bolster its rule in the disputed region through the vote, which is being held on four different dates according to the various districts.

The first two rounds -- on September 16 and 24 -- passed off relatively peacefully, with New Delhi hailing the 47 percent and 41 percent turnouts recorded on the respective days.

But violence has surged between polling days, which are marked by

intense security force deployments, with party workers and candidates being especially targeted.

On Tuesday, it is the turn of some 1.81 million voters in the violent central and southern districts of Pulwama, Anantnag and Udhampur, and the relatively peaceful Kathua district in the far south of the restive state.

Muslim militants opposed to Indian rule in Kashmir have been doing their utmost to make good their promise to kill those participating in the polls, while a call by the region's main separatist alliance for a vote boycott was instrumental in pushing down the participation in the second round, particularly in Srinagar, the summer capital.



PHOTO: AFP

An unknown woman survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide is taken away by family members and by a policeman in Butare's stadium on Sunday, where more than 2,000 prisoners suspected of taking part in the genocide were made to face the victims of the massacre. All suspects who were not firmly identified by the crowd were granted bail on the spot, pending trial by a village court.